Action Project

Title: Course Delivery and Offerings
Version: 3

Institution: Illinois Central College
Status: Completed
Submitted: 2010-12-14
Category: 3-Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs

Timeline
- Planned project kickoff date: 2008-10-01
- Target completion date: 2011-12-15
- Actual completion date: 2011-01-10

Project Detail

Project Goal
Describe this Action Project's goal in 100 words or fewer

The goal is to assess student course needs and preferences with respect to duration, days/times offered and delivery mode. The team will identify changes that will increase student satisfaction with the course offerings, increase enrollment opportunities for students, and attract new students to pursue their ICC education.

Reasons For Project
Describe briefly your institution's reasons for taking on this Action Project now -- why the project and its goals are high among your current priorities

Students ranked “convenient times for classes” with high importance on the Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) and indicated they were not satisfied with the current schedule. Enrollment trends suggest increased interest in web and hybrid classes. Changes in course delivery and the course schedule will allow ICC students more flexible options when scheduling classes.

Organizational Areas Affected
List the organizational areas -- institutional departments, programs, divisions, or units -- most affected by or involved in this Action Project

Academic departments, student services, instructional services, and institutional research

Key Organizational Process(es)
Name and describe briefly the key organizational process(es) that you expect this Action Project to change or improve

This project will improve the processes for planning the academic course schedule.
Project Time Frame Rationale
Explain the rationale for the length of time planned for this Action Project (from kickoff to target completion)

The project must involve multiple semesters because there is a lag time between schedule creation, student enrollment, and enrollment data analysis. These peak periods require an extended project duration.

Project Success Monitoring
Describe how you plan to monitor how successfully your efforts on this Action Project are progressing

Specific improvements will be monitored based on enrollment data analysis of delivery mode coupled with scheduled offerings.

Project Outcome Measures
Describe the overall "outcome" measures or indicators that will tell you whether this Action Project has been a success or failure in achieving its goals

Overall outcome measures include student satisfaction with course scheduling and delivery mode choices as measured on the SSI. In addition, enrollment trends and course delivery options will be examined for viability.

Annual Update

Project Accomplishments and Status
Describe the past year's accomplishments and the current status of this Action Project

The project was chartered in Fall of 2008 and was initially focused on developing a systematic process to review and analyze the course offerings to identify opportunities for improvement. In FY 2009 the process was developed and tested, with the identification of several focus areas. These included increasing the number of and student knowledge of online and hybrid offerings, increasing the number of 12 week classes with accommodations to increase student success, offering additional summer afternoon classes, establishing uniform hybrid times to help students build an efficient schedule, and to pilot complementary science lab/general education hybrids to fill students’ scheduling gaps.

In FY 2010, work was completed to help students better identify and understand online and hybrid offerings and additional summer classes were added to the schedule. The pilot to build complementary classes was not successful, but it was determined that the right classes may not have been identified and students were unaware of the opportunity. No work was done on the addition of 12 week classes or the establishment of uniform hybrid times.

A team was assembled in February of 2011 to replicate the course offering review and identify additional opportunities. As expected, some opportunities re-emerged. For example, the team identified a continued need to increase the online offering (web and hybrid) and to increase the 12 week course offerings. However, the team noted that adding additional 12 week courses should be done deliberately. A review of current course offerings and times, compared to the make-up of students who are taking 12 week courses is needed. If a large number of students are taking 12 week courses because they decided to
switch after the semester was underway, the courses need to be scheduled in such a way as to accommodate students who already have a ‘standard’ schedule. The team determined that the August minimester might be an opportunity for improvement. There is relatively low demand for this minimester and further review may yield some opportunities to fold these courses into the summer schedule and eliminate the August minimester.

In FY 2011 the data for the Course Delivery Review was made available on the intranet site to provide easy and quick access to this information. Schedulers can sort and analyze data by department, program, student segment, etc. to identify enrollment trends and opportunities to change their schedules to better meet student needs. Schedulers have received training on how to use the new system.

This year’s project is a follow-up to the initial project, which developed a process to use data to review and analyze the course offering. The project is now completed with the inclusion of the data for the review on the academic organization intranet site which is available to those who build the schedule.

Institution Involvement
Describe how the institution involved people in work on this Action Project

A Six Sigma team was chartered and the process owner was the Director of Institutional Research. The academic departments were represented by both faculty and administration on the team, along with student services representatives including advisors, instructional services representatives, and institutional research members.

Next Steps
Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project

The Action Project is ready to be retired. The initiatives and outcomes of the project will continue. Data generated for a review of the course offering are now available to schedulers on-demand. Going forward, the ‘process’ will be reviewed at least annually to ensure that the data continues to be valuable and meets schedulers needs. The review will be organized and led by the process owner. Additional needs may include such things as ‘time to fill’ reports and ‘alerts’ when a class meets an enrollment threshold. These needs would surface in the annual review of the data available. Error message data was included in the process to review the course offering but is not currently available on demand. This data can be included in the annual review to provide a more complete picture. Finally, the initial review included a student survey to gather information about student needs and requirements. Although the survey is not needed every year, the annual review team may choose to periodically administer such a survey to identify student preferences that are not apparent in the analysis of enrollment data.

Resulting Effective Practices
Describe any "effective practice(s)" that resulted from your work on this Action Project
The effective practices from this action project entail the use of outcome measures to identify opportunities to make schedule changes that will better meet the needs of students. Overall outcome measures include student satisfaction with course scheduling and delivery mode choices as measured on the SSI, which will be administered again in Fall 2012. These results will be compared to previous SSI results. Another important measure is the ability of stakeholders to use the data to identify options and changes they can make in the course schedule to better meet changing demands.

Project Challenges
What challenges, if any, are you still facing in regards to this Action Project? This is an opportunity to get constructive, actionable feedback and advice from our review process. Use this question to specify where your blocks, gaps, sticking points, or problems are. If you have already fashioned strategies to deal with any challenge you face, share both the challenge and your strategy for meeting it. If you would like to discuss the possibility of AQIP providing you help beyond the review process, explain your need(s) and tell us whom to contact and when.

No challenges remain at this time and the action project is ready to be retired. The data generated from the action project is available for all course schedulers to use as future schedules are built with the needs of the students at the forefront.

Annual Update

Reason for completion
What is the primary reason for closing this project?

The project goal of assessing student course needs and preferences with respect to duration, days/times offered and delivery mode has been met. Changes have been identified that could increase student satisfaction with the course offerings, increase enrollment opportunities for students, and attract new students to pursue their education. Much data has been generated regarding course offerings and is available to the course schedulers on-demand. A new data warehouse has been implemented at the college where much of this data is housed. Schedulers have been trained on use of the data warehouse. SSI data will continue to be used to assist with determining student satisfaction with the course offerings. An annual review, using the on-demand data and the SSI or other student surveys/complaint data will be analyzed for areas of continuous improvement.

Success Factors
What aspects of this project would you categorize as successful?

This project made the college sit down and focus on information; information regarding the course schedule: how to better meet the needs of students. The acquisition of the data warehouse has provided schedulers with a wealth of information regarding course fill-rates and capacities which, along with future SSI data, will assist with future scheduling of courses. In addition, the college's intranet has the review data information for replication purposes in future years.

Unsuccessful Factors
What aspects of this project would you categorize as less than successful?

It was difficult at times to get everyone on the same page. Quantitative data does not always
tell a person the entire story; many times the qualitative information regarding the
difficulties of building the course schedule get minimized. Keeping that in mind, a process
was developed regarding the use of data to assist with building the course schedule. This
data is now available to all course schedulers to use in future schedule builds.